

---

II. *Anecdotes of the late Dr. Patrick Browne, Author of the Natural History of Jamaica.* By *Aylmer Bourke Lambert, Esq. V. P. L. S.*

Read Dec. 1, 1795.

HAVING in a visit to Ireland in the year 1790 accidentally met with Dr. *Patrick Browne*, well known to this Society by his *Natural History of Jamaica*, I judged it might not be an unacceptable anecdote to give some account of my interview with this veteran in those pursuits which form the intentions of our meetings.

I first heard of him by the country people in the neighbourhood of Ballinrobe in the county of Mayo, at which place he lived. I sent him a message that I would wait on him. He was then so infirm that I found him confined to his room and his bed, but he received me with much cordiality when I told him my errand was to visit him merely from respect as a lover of the Science of Botany; and I gave him the first information of our institution, and the success that had hitherto attended our researches.

He conversed much on the subject of botany, and informed me that he had corresponded for twenty years with Linnæus himself, and had communicated many plants to him. Those Gentlemen who are at all conversant with the *Amœnitates Academicæ* will recollect, in the fifth volume of that collection, a paper under the title of *Pugillus Plantarum Jamaicensium*, in which the descriptions of 130 species are more correctly given than they stand in Dr. *Browne's* book. This was in consequence of Dr. Solander's having purchased *Browne's* whole collection, and sent it to Sweden for Linnæus.

And hence, in the *Species Plantarum* of 1764, Linnæus was enabled to correct both Sloane and *Browne* himself in many instances.

After Dr. *Browne's* return from Jamaica, and the publication of his History, he took another voyage to the West Indies, where he resided, principally in Montserrat and Antigua, occupied in the practice of physic, for four years. He returned home for the last time in 1781.

Having much leisure during this stay in the islands, he collected a large Herbarium, and many seeds, which on his return he presented to Dr. Edward Hill, Professor of Botany in the University of Dublin.

He also began a *Flora Indiæ Occidentalis*, which formed a thin quarto volume; this he presented to me, and it is now in the possession of our President. I recollect, in speaking of this manuscript, that he told me he had taken uncommon pains to describe and discriminate the generic characters of the *Ipomœa* and *Convolvulus*; and that Linnæus had signified, in a letter to him, his approbation of the distinctions given of those genera.

I could not help remarking the small number of books that he seemed to possess on the subject of Natural History, his suppellex being confined to the *Genera* and *Species Plantarum* of Linnæus, and a copy of Hill's edition of *Ray's Synopsis*, especially when I recollected the considerable number of authors he had quoted in his History of Jamaica; but he soon gave me to understand that in his last voyage he had the misfortune to lose his library, consisting of 200 volumes on Natural History subjects.

During my abode in his neighbourhood I paid him several visits, in one of which he made me a present of a MS. *Flora Hibernica*, and of a small Herbarium collected in the counties of Mayo and Galway, with a separate Collection of Mosses, which are now in the possession of this Society.

In my way to the Doctor I one morning found the *Cynofurus cæruleus* of Linnæus, which had escaped his notice, and of which he immediately gave a short description. This I have the pleasure of presenting to the Society, as a specimen of his hand-writing, and as the last description of a plant that he ever wrote.

When at Dublin, some time after I left him, I procured from Mr. Wilson the bookseller the letter I now produce, which was written a little time before his death. I produce it, not because it contains any very interesting information, but as a proof that to the last he preserved a wish to improve and propagate botanical knowledge. By this it appears too, that he had meditated to give all the assistance in his power towards the publication of the *Flora Hibernica*.

He received from me the first intelligence of the new edition of his History of Jamaica, and expressed a great desire to have seen it; but he died soon after, aged 70, and was buried at Crosboyne near Castle Macgarret in the county of Mayo.

*Letter from Dr. Browne to Mr. Wilson Bookseller of Dublin, written a little while before his Death.*

“ MY design was only to give a simple and as cheap a Catalogue of the plants I met with here as I could devise. I mentioned it to Sir J. Banks, and he assured me he spoke to the Provost, and he promised to put a *Flora Hibernica* on foot. Such a Catalogue as mine might be of great service to such a work; and such a work alone deserves the embellishment and attention you mention. But it would require a visit to the south and north of the kingdom; undertakings by no means fit for infirmity at 70. However, by publishing small Catalogues, it might be brought about by individuals, and mine you are welcome to towards any thing of that sort.

Pultney's View of Linnæus I have not seen, and wish you would send it to me: I will get one of our carriers to call for it soon, and will be obliged to you to alter such English names as you see proper. As to the Irish, if ever you print it, put the Irish in Italicks only. I wrote them as much to the pronounciation of the Irish as I could, but not according to the Irish orthography, which I could not find in any book. *Paddowpipe* is undoubtedly the proper name of the *Hippuris*. I do not think the addition of *rush* proper to any name, and the method of adding a short character to the different genera (as in Linnæus's *Systema*) best, as in Martyn's of Cambridge. You mention the title-page: I think you ought not to publish more than a design of printing a *Flora Hibernica*, if such a thing could be completed, and of giving a Catalogue, in the cheapest manner possible, of such plants as have been collected for such an undertaking, with the English and Irish names, keeping the descriptions and remarks for a capital work. As to Theirheld and K. Eogh's, I have had them, and think nothing of them. I lost all my books a few years ago: I had about 200 botanical books, and now I have only the *Genera & Species Plantarum* of Linnæus, with a copy of Ray's *Synopsis* in a Linnæan dress, which was the amusement of some time to me some years past. Lord Lucan promised to send me another copy of Dill. and Ray's *Synopsis*. If you could succeed in getting any other additions, so as to undertake a general *Flora Hibernica*, if I live and am able to stir I shall give you what assistance I can in the manuscript you have, which you may keep. *Ligusticum Scoticum* of that MS. is the *Smyrnum Olusatrum*.

“ I have made out a Catalogue of our Agarics, for which this last season was very favourable, and it amounts to eighteen or more; but I have not this by me.”